

September 1995

Interview with Cathy Gordon

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Recommended Citation

Strauch, Katina (1995) "Interview with Cathy Gordon," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 7: Iss. 4, Article 2.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.1577>

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Interview with Cathy Gordon

Vice President, Knight-Ridder Information, Inc. SourceOne

by Katina Strauch

This is a true story. I spoke with Cathy Gordon at 5 AM California time and she didn't hang up on me! Read what she said. And it even makes sense. — KS

ATG: Who are you? How does **KRII's** acquisition of **CARL** and **UnCover** fit into your overall business plan?

CG: I started my professional life as a law librarian and worked in Philadelphia for a group of lawyers. Then I went to **Mead Data Central** when **Lexis** was just getting off the ground. I've been with **Knight-Ridder** for 11 years and was appointed Vice President for **SourceOne** in January, 1995, when we consolidated our other document delivery services into **KR SourceOne**. I went to library school at **Villanova**. I've been in the information industry since 1976 and, boy, have I seen a lot of changes, but not as many as I've seen in the last two years.

People are much more aware of information today. I remember when **Readers Guide** was the extent of the information available. Computers changed all that. With the consumer services, the end user's awareness of information is increasing and instead of 3 articles on a subject, there are more like 43. The environment now is scary, because it is changing so fast, yet it is very exciting.

We actually began talking with **Ward Shaw** and **Becky Lenzini** about the acquisition of **UnCover** about two years ago. At that time, we were interested in linking the document delivery aspects of **UnCover** to our **Dialog** databases. The future is how much of the document delivery function can we automate. Document delivery services can't just keep adding infinitely more people and **Dialog** has always been a consolidator of information.

Then we began to recognize that **CARL** has done some innovative and interesting things especially with interfaces for the end user. We saw the potential for a partnership where **CARL** provides the interfaces and



we at **KRII** provide content behind that interface. We see this as a very positive step. This combination of the two companies can do nothing but give the library more and better options, better opportunities to serve their end users. It's exciting.

ATG: Can you get more specific?

CG: Right now, in the early days of planning, our sense is if **CARL** can link into some of the **Dialog** content, their user-friendly front end would operate against our databases with a non clock-ticking pricing structure. Perhaps we will link more content into **UnCover** and use the **UnCover** interfaces. We are currently developing easy-to-use front ends in the business and science area which we may make available through the **CARL** system. We are trying to overcome the "un-user friendly" front end that we have yet also continue to give the "power users" (the sophisticated professional searchers) something that will satisfy them. We are working on a Web-based product for

scientists which will come out early in 1996 and a Windows product for business types who are looking for information on companies.

These are some of our early ideas at this point. We are also wide open for suggestions. We would love to hear from customers about what they are looking for. **Knight-Ridder Information** will own **CARL** and **UnCover** but if you don't listen to your customers you might as well hang it up.

ATG: How high are our prices going to go up?

CG: We are aware of your concerns and have heard the pricing issues consistently discussed. We have learned the lesson that increases in price greatly effect the library market's ability to provide service to their users. We are very sensitive to that. We don't anticipate taking away what you have today.

CARL and **UnCover** are two different product lines that are connected with their own constituencies. With **Dialog**, we have renegotiated a lot of our database licenses so that we are now in a better position to offer services priced for libraries. We have 600 databases, and we are developing pricing structures that libraries are looking for. There is real opportunity in this market. **Dialog** has the additional content and **CARL** and **UnCover** are excited about offering this content in their environment.

We are looking at different pricing models. Let's face it, the end user community does not understand what the cost of a scholarly journal subscription is and copyright is not part of anything that they are aware of. If the copyright fee is up to \$12 or \$15, how can you pass that on to the end user practically speaking, without incurring a lot of illegal copying because the end user thinks that you are charging too much. Here is where the redistribution model kicks in. If you buy in bulk, the individual copyright price declines. There is new software out there that counts copies and I think that we have to move to this kind of pricing model.

ATG: How about **Knowledge Index**? Wasn't that an end user product that you sold off?

CG: No, we did not sell **Knowledge Index**. It is now on **CompuServe**, but it is still a **Knight-Ridder Information, Inc.** product.

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Cathy Gordon is Vice President of **Knight-Ridder SourceOne**. She is a librarian. I asked her what she does in her spare time (from midnight to 5 AM) and she told me she likes to race her 1967 Corvette (she says it's a stress reducer?), read books, and snuggle with her cats. She has a 25-year-old son, but her newest baby is **SourceOne**. She wants to talk to us and welcomes our calls — Her direct line is 415-254-8420 and her e-mail is <cathy_gordon@corp.dialog.com>.

The Centuries-Old Book Community is No More: Three Eminent Book Professionals Lament Its Changing Nature in the Computer Age

by Nat Bodian (Publisher's Marketing Consultant)

As the impact of the computer in recent years has brought about technological changes that have transformed our world, so too, has the world of book publishing gone through changes that have rendered it virtually unrecognizable from the small community that it had been for nearly two centuries.

So says **John Tebbel**, former head of the New York University Department of Journalism and a highly-regarded publishing industry historian and spokesperson over the past several decades.

Tebbel, writing in the Foreword of the recently-published *Opportunities in Publishing Careers* (NTC Publishing Group), cautions that changes in book publishing that began in the seventies have rendered the book industry virtually unrecognizable from what it had been — a community of like-minded people — where everyone knew everybody else.

The co-authors of *Opportunities in Publishing Careers*, two distinguished publishing professionals — **Robert A. Carter** and **S. William Pattis** — heartily agree, especially with regard to "New York publishing," which they say in a concluding chapter has been passing from its traditional family-held character to a state where it is pub-



licly held, part of a conglomerate, or a wholly owned subsidiary of a nonbook publishing corporation.

Carter had a long career in the book industry and was a contributing editor to *Publishers Weekly*. He also edited the classic industry reference, *Trade Book Marketing*. Pattis is head of the NTC Publishing Group.

"In this new climate," say Carter and Pattis, "the pressure to make all divisions of a publishing house show a profit is great as is the pressure to eliminate, or at least reduce, the elements that show a loss."

The authors lament the commonality of

"instances where corporate executives with no knowledge of book publishing have been sent to operate book house subsidiaries."

They add that as "costly mistakes have sometimes been made by these executives, the interior atmosphere of some publishing houses has been changed, for the worse, and the trend has been to permit the profit ends to override the literary means. This trend... has had a depressing effect on the publishing of anything but those books that are reasonably assured of large sales.

"When fewer chances are taken, it is likely that fewer books of purely literary merit will be published."

This is a problem, the co-authors conclude, for the next generation of publishers "because it is unlikely that publishing, once infused with new capital, will ever go back to the old days when it was a cottage industry."

Opportunities in Publishing Careers is a three-part book with equal parts dedicated to book, magazine, and newspaper publishing. It is available from NTC Publishing Group, Lincolnwood, IL in hardcover at \$13.95 (ISBN 0-8442-4431-7) and in paper at \$19.95 (ISBN 0-8442-4432-5). 146 pp., 1995.

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uct. At the time, we couldn't reach the consumer market and we knew we either had to get rid of *KI* or figure out some way to put it on a consumer service.

It's hard to say right now what direction we will go into for the consumer market. The biggest consumer market that we have right now is the one that **CARL** serves. We may find some interesting things that we can do. As I said earlier, **CARL** has created some wonderful interfaces and we may provide content behind that interface. For example, since **Knight-Ridder** is a large newspaper publisher, we may link to the newspaper content on **Dialog**. **Knight-Ridder** is interested in how we can encourage people

to read and with **CARL**, we can get more newspaper content in front of the reading public. We are very interested in the **Kids Catalog** and **Homework Helper**. **CARL** has exclusive licensing rights in the public library market and is also looking at the higher education market. And **NoveList** is very interesting. For those of us who are readers it is a wonderful product and we can even expand it to cover other types of media.

ATG: Do you see any use for the librarian in this scenario?

CG: The library is a fundamental piece of everything. Librarians are trying to figure out how they add value in this new electronic information-rich environment. I think

that they are doing a great job. There is no question that there is and will be a continuing place for librarians in the future and we have to make sure that people see our value. The library's connection with people is great. We are all impacted by the increasing amount of work and staff cuts and librarians must increasingly do more with less. **KRII** is committed to providing a service that does more with less.

Well, y'all, that's the end of our brief conversation. Obviously there's room for more questions and input. Cathy says to call her anytime (and she means it!). Her direct line is 415-254-8420 or fax 415-254-8463 and her e-mail is <cathy_gordon@corp.dialog.com> — KS